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Message Text

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43
ACTION DPW-01

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-02 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

IO-13 AID-20 EUR-25 SSO-00 NSCE-00 RSR-01 /136 W
---------- 116239
R 031140 Z JUL 73
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4076
INFO USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 11966

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, VS
SUBJECT: MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ISSUES COMMUNIQUE ON CIVILIAN PRISONERS

REF: FBIS SAIGON 021237 Z

1. THE GVN FOREIGN MINISTRY JULY 2 ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE ON CIVILIAN PRISONERS IN SOUTH VIETNAM. VIETNAMESE AND ENGLISH VERSIONS WERE PUBLISHED. REFERENCE FBIS CARROQD THE TEXT. SUMMARY FOLLOWS:

2. NOTING THAT NUMEROUS LETTERS HAD BEEN RECEIVED ON THE SUBJECT, THE COMMUNIQUE STATED THAT THE SIMILAR FORMAT OF NEARLY ALL THESE LETTERS PROVED THAT THEY WERE " ORCHESTRATED BY INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM." THE MINISTRY DECLARED THAT IT ISSUED THE COMMUNIQUE IN ORDER TO ANSWER THIS CAMPAIGN AND " ENLIGHTEN" THOSE INFLUENCED BY THE COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA. THE COMMUNIQUE ADDED THAT THE TPJMC IS CURRENTLY STUDYING THE PROBLEM OF RETURNING CIVILIAN PRISONERS, AND THAT " BOTH SIDES HAVE AGREED UPON THE DESIGNATION OF THE NATIONAL RED CROSS OF CANADA AND POLAND TO VISIT ALL PLACES WHERE THE CAPTURED AND DETAINED VIETNAMESE ARE HELD." (COMMENT: ACCORDING TO LATEST REPORTS, THIS AGREEMENT EXISTS IN PRINCIPLE ONLY. SEE SAIGON 11817 AND 11838.) THE COMMUNIQUE CONCLUDED WITH THE ADMONITION THAT THE COMMUNISTS DHOULD BE THE TARGET OF THOSE " WILLING TO BE CONSTRUCTIVE" ON THIS ISSUE, BECAUSE THE COMMUNISTS
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ARE THE ONE WHO HAVE VIOLATED THE AGREEMENT.

3. ATTACHED TO THE COMMUNIQUE WAS AN ANNEX DETAILING THE GVN POSITION ON CIVILIAN PRISONERS. REFERENCE FBIS DID NOT CARRY THE TEXT. COPY BEING POUCHED. HIGHLIGHTS ARE THE FOLLOWING:

(A) " POLITICAL PRISONERS". THE MINISTRY SAYS THAT " NOBODY HAS BEEN ARRESTED MERELY FOR HAVING EXPRESSED HIS VIEWS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT." OPPOSITION LEADERS " FREELY" ADVOCATE THEIR VIEWS IN
THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND THE NEWSPAPERS. TO PROTECT SECURITY AND ENFORCE LAW AND ORDER, NATURALLY THE RVN HAS HAD TO TAKE " DRASTIC MEASURES" AGAINST THOSE WHO UNDERTAKE VANDALISM, REBELLION, ETC. THESE INDIVIDUALS CANNOT BE CONSIDERED POLITICAL OFFENDERS.
" THEREFORE, THERE ARE NO ' POLITICAL PRISONERS" IN THE RVN BUT ONLY 5,081 COMMUNIST CIVILIAN PERSONNEL, OF WHICH 750 HAVE BEEN RELEASED, AND OTHER COMMON CRIMINALS."

(B) THE ISSUE OF 200,000 PRISONERS. THE MINISTRY ASSERTS THAT

ALL THE PRISONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM CAN CONTAIN NO MORE THAN 35,000 PERONS. (COMMENT: AN ESTIMATE OF THE TOTAL CAPACITY OF THE NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL CORRECTION CENTERS AS OF DECEMBER 31, 1972, WAS 36,923.

ADDING DETENTION CENTERS AND LOCKUPS DOWN TO THE LOWEST LOCAL LEVEL,
THE FIGURE AS OF THE SAME DATE BECOMES 51,941.) COMMUNIQUE ASSERTS THAT THE GVN CAN DOCUMENT 68,621 CIVILIANS TAKEN BY THE OTHER SIDE SINCE 1954.

(C) TREATMENT OF PRISONERS. THE DOCUMENT DEFENDS THE RECORD OF THE GVN IN ITS TREATMENT OF PRISONERS, NOTING PARTICULARLY THAT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS SOCIETIES HAVE FREQUENTLY BEEN INVITED TO VISIT THE FACILITIES.

(D) PROTESTING ORGANIZATIONS. REFERRING SPECIFICALLY TO AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, THE ANNEX DECLARES: " IF THEY SAY THEY ARE NOT COMMUNIST OR PRO- COMMUNIST, THEN IN THE NAME OF JUSTICE AND HUMANITY THEY ARE REQUESTED TWO WRITE ALSO THE COMMUNIST SIDE." THE NAMES OF TWENTY PRIESTS AND NUNS SAID TO BE ABDUCTED BY THE COMMUNISTS ARE LISTED. THE SERVICES OF RVN DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR MISSIONS ABROAD ARE OFFERED TO SUPPLY THE FULL LIST OF CIVILIANS CAPTURED BY THE COMMUNISTS SINCE 1954.
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4. COMMENT: THIS COMMUNIQUE AND ANNEX CONSITITUE A MAJOR GVN COUNTERATTACK AGAINST FOREIGN CRITICS ON THIS THORNY ISSUE. THEY ARE CAREFULLY THOUGHT OUT DOCUMENTS. PROVIDED THEIR HEAVY-HANDEDNESS

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IN LINKING ALL CRITICISMS WITH THE COMMUNISTS DOES NOT BACKFIRE, THEY COULD BE USEFUL IN TURNING ATTENTION TO THE SINS OF THE OTHER SIDE FOR A CHANGE. WE BELIEVE THE ANNEX DOES, HOWEVER, CONTAIN AT LEAST ONE MILEADING ITEM IN ITS ESTIMATE OF GVN PRISON CAPACITY.
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